

How to help when someone might be suicidal.

If you're worried about someone, you don't need to have all the answers. Simply being there, asking directly and staying connected can make a meaningful difference. This resource can help you start the conversation, respond with care, and look after yourself along the way.

Signs to look out for

You might notice:

- Withdrawing from friends, family or activities they usually enjoy
- Behaving more recklessly than usual, or increasing their use of alcohol or other drugs
- Giving away possessions or putting their affairs in order
- A sudden, unexpected calm after a period of distress
- Talking about feeling hopeless, trapped or like a burden to others
- Expressing that they don't want to be here, or that others would be better off without them
- Talking about death or suicide directly or indirectly
- A recent significant loss (e.g. relationship, job, or bereavement)
- A previous suicide attempt
- Symptoms of a mental health condition getting worse

It's important to know that suicidal thoughts don't always come with visible warning signs. Sometimes, there are no obvious changes at all.

Suicide is complex, and it can affect anyone regardless of age, background, or how things might appear from the outside.

If you have a feeling something isn't right, it's okay to ask.

Tips for offering support

Many people worry that asking about suicide will plant the idea. It won't. Asking directly can actually be a relief for someone who has been carrying these thoughts alone.

Tell them what you've noticed

Choose a calm moment and a private place if you can. Tell them what you've observed: 'I've noticed you seem really flat lately and I've been worried about you.' Then ask directly: 'Are you having thoughts of suicide?'

Listen without trying to fix

You don't need to solve anything. Listen without interrupting, and acknowledge what they're sharing: 'That sounds really hard. I'm glad you told me.' Avoid minimising ('It could be worse') or rushing to reassure ('I'm sure you'll be fine'). Let them share at their own pace.

Take what they say seriously

If they disclose suicidal thoughts, stay calm and take it seriously. Ask whether they have a plan, and whether they have access to anything they could use to hurt themselves. This helps you understand how much immediate support they need.

If they have a plan or access to means

This is a crisis situation. Stay with them, call Triple Zero (000) or take them to your nearest emergency department. If it's safe to do so, help them put distance between themselves and anything they could use to harm themselves. You might ask them to give it to you or move it somewhere less accessible.

If they're having thoughts but don't have a plan right now

You can still help. Encourage them to contact their GP, psychologist, or mental health service as soon as possible. (Ideally that day.) Offer to help them make the call or go with them. You might also suggest calling Lifeline (13 11 14) or the Suicide Call Back Service (1300 659 467) together if they're not sure where to start. Stay in touch and check back in with them.

Let them know you're not going anywhere. Something as simple as 'I'm really glad you told me. I'm going to help you get through this' can matter more than you might think.

Help them create a safety plan

A safety plan is a personal, practical plan that helps someone notice when things are getting harder and reminds them what can help them stay safe. If the person doesn't have access to an existing plan, you can use **SANE's My Safety Plan template in RecoveryClub**. Some people also find the **Beyond Now safety planning app** helpful, which allows you to create and update a safety plan on your phone or computer.

Keep in mind that safety plans work best when written in the person's own words. Your role is to support them through it, not to write it for them.

Help is available 24/7.

If you believe someone's life is at risk:

- Call **Triple Zero (000)** and stay with them until help arrives
- Try to remove or secure access to anything they could use to harm themselves if it's safe to do so
- Go to your nearest emergency department
- Call **Lifeline** (13 11 14), **13 YARN** (13 92 76) or **Suicide Call Back Service** (1300 659 467) for guidance if you're unsure what to do next

You don't have to manage this alone. Crisis services support family members, friends, and carers too – not just the person in distress.

You don't have to do this alone.

In **SANE Forums**, you can find connection in the dedicated Friends, Family, & Carers Space. You might share what's been on your mind, ask how others have coped, or simply read and know you're not alone.

SANE's Better Off With You community hosts real stories from people who've experienced suicidal thoughts or attempts and found their way through.

SANE RecoveryClub is a free six-month online recovery program combining peer support, professional guidance and practical tools that's designed to complement clinical care. You can access resources to help you support the person you're concerned about as well as tools to look after your own wellbeing.

SANE's Service Enquiry Line (1800 187 263) and **Webchat** (sane.org) can help you find the right mental health support for you. Available Mon–Fri, 10am–8pm AEST/AEDT.

Looking after yourself.

Supporting someone through suicidal thoughts or a crisis can be emotionally demanding. Your wellbeing matters too.

Share the responsibility

If possible, try to involve other trusted people (family, friends, or health professionals), so the weight isn't yours alone to carry.

Talk to someone

It's common to replay conversations, question your responses or feel frightened about what might happen. Talking with someone you trust can help you process what you're going through.

Set realistic limits

It's not possible to be available all the time and trying to be can lead to burnout. It's okay to step away, sleep, go to work and take breaks while other supports are in place.

Stay connected to your own life

Maintaining small routines (exercise, time with friends, doing things you enjoy) can help you stay grounded during a stressful period.

Know that you don't have to have it all figured out

There's no perfect way to support someone. Showing up consistently, even imperfectly, matters more than saying the right thing every time.